

regulations in the interim shows the American people we are making progress toward a simple and lasting solution.

No changes in the gains tax percentages are made in this measure. The rates, agreed to by the Clinton administration earlier this year, would simply be applied without the time constraints. It is not only bipartisan, but logical as well. No concessions are made to corporate or big business capital gains taxes, nor is this bill designed to aid the wealthy. It allows individuals the opportunity to make investment decisions based on the market, rather than by obtuse Government time constraints. The rates in the present law are fair, the holding periods are not.

Mr. Speaker, this is a tremendous opportunity to help American families invest for their future. This bill removes frustrating obstacles for small businesses and investors who are often stymied in their efforts to reinvest their gains immediately because of the excessive losses they would incur under current law.

I urge my colleagues to support this technical change to the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. Removing the time constraints on capital gains tax demonstrates our desire to simplify the Tax Code and help Americans invest without unnecessary restrictions.

PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN
FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYEES

HON. THOMAS J. MANTON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 1997

Mr. MANTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late John Sturdivant, President of the American Federation of Government Employees.

Mr. Sturdivant passed away on October 28, 1997, after a long, heroic fight against leukemia. I extend my most heartfelt condolences to Mr. Sturdivant's family. I hope it is of some comfort to the family to know that John greatly improved the lives of many through his work with the AFGE.

Through charismatic and innovative leadership, John Sturdivant brought the American Federation of Government Employees to prominence. He strived to increase wages and improve working conditions and benefits for Federal employees. Whether faced with government downsizing or budget cuts, John Sturdivant would face the situation with strength and determination. He consistently, and successfully, fought for Federal employees and the 600,000 workers he represented are sure to feel his loss.

John Sturdivant will be missed not only by his family, but by all the Federal employees he represented, as well as those with whom he bargained. It is a rare individual who possesses the talent and skills demonstrated by John Sturdivant in his many years of service to the labor movement.

Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to John Sturdivant for his achievements as the progressive leader of the American Federation of Government Employees.

BISHOP WILLIAM SWING OF THE
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CALI-
FORNIA DISCUSSES THE UNITED
RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE, AN EF-
FORT TO ENCOURAGE PEACE
AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN
RIGHTS

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 1997

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, the Right Reverend William Swing, Bishop of the Diocese of California of the Episcopal Church in the United States, is one of the outstanding religious leaders of our Nation. We in the bay area have the great blessing of having him in our city of San Francisco. Bishop Swing is an extraordinary man who is dedicated to promoting peace and respect for human rights around the globe. Throughout his life, he has also been sincerely dedicated to helping the homeless, the elderly, and the sick.

Recently, Bishop Swing has launched the United Religions Initiative which seeks to unite all religions in order to establish peace among them. In a world where blood is often shed in the name of religious belief, the United Religions Initiative is working toward the reconciliation of religious groups for the good of all nations.

Mr. Speaker, on October 29, Bishop Swing made a presentation at a briefing of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus to discuss the United Religions Initiative with Members of Congress and congressional staff. I had the pleasure of introducing Bishop Swing and spending time with him on that occasion as he presented his ideas for encouraging peace and respect for human rights.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that Bishop Swing's remarks at this recent meeting of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus be placed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to give thoughtful and serious considerations to the ideas of this dedicated man of God.

REMARKS OF BISHOP WILLIAM SWING TO THE
CONGRESSIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS

I would like to call attention to an Initiative that could have a profound influence on global peacemaking. I am referring to the United Religions Initiative. This initiative seeks to create a new global forum where the world's faith communities, continuing to respect each others distinctness, would meet together on a daily and permanent basis to deepen mutual understanding, recognition and respect; to create an open dialogue for exchanging ideas and finding a common voice; and to cooperate in new ways to address urgent suffering. This effort would create for the world's religions a forum with the stature and visibility of the United Nations.

As the people of the world work together to shape a new world order following the end of the Cold War, we confront enormous questions. How can we ensure peace? How can the world's people live together as neighbors? What structures of cooperative effort can help us to secure a decent world for our grandchildren? And what visions can guide us as we consider these questions? Finding answers together will require not only new ways of thinking and new voices at the table, but also a firm foundation of shared spiritual values. In this conversation, the world's religions must necessarily be involved.

When we look to our religious traditions for guidance, however, we must first ac-

knowledge a hard truth: while religions historically have been an immense source of good, they have also been the direct cause of much violent conflict. When not actually fighting themselves, they have all too often fanned the flames of hatred, or stood mute in the presence of injustice. Not one of the original founders of the world's religions taught murder, coercion or injustice as a way of propagating the faith; and yet religious violence continues to this day, deeply injuring the moral credibility of our religious institutions. Moreover, such violence is increasingly a major threat to world peace. Much of the large scale violence in the world today—in Bosnia, Chechnya, Palestine, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and East Timor, for example—is caused, encouraged or abetted by religion.

And yet the world's religions are also humanity's great treasure houses, where our deepest values, aspirations and wisdom have been sustained. It is religion that reminds us that life is ultimately larger than what we know; that life is sacred; that each of us is called to act responsibly in light of these truths; and that the deepest meanings of life are to be found beyond narrow self-interest. Religions are our window to a larger life, a life beyond ourselves. Drawing on their deepest sources, could they themselves now set an example of how we all might live with one another as neighbors? It is the conviction of the United Religions Initiative that this is indeed the challenge.

The Initiative owes much to previous interfaith efforts. Over the last 100 years, many have worked to begin dialogue and cooperation among people of different faiths. On the local level, interfaith cooperation is already rapidly emerging in hospital ministries, jail ministries, and university campus ministries. Cities around the world are developing interfaith commissions. National interfaith coalitions are beginning to appear. And a few groups, such as the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, the Temple of Understanding, the International Association for Religious Freedom, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace, have undertaken significant international dialogues and action projects. All of these distinct efforts have begun to provide an infrastructure of interfaith work throughout the world; and all of this deserves to be acknowledged and genuinely celebrated.

Given this present level of interreligious activity, and the world's search for a new foundation of shared values, is there anything else that could happen among religions beyond what already exists? The answer is an emphatic yes. There is a vast untapped potential for partnership among the world's religions that could be an enormous resource for peace-making and community building. If religions themselves could move just one step beyond their ancient competitions and attempt a new dimension of religious cooperation, a great new focus for global hope would be forthcoming. And if religions, continuing to respect their differences, were then able to join their enormous resources in a serious, mutual effort of service to the world, a tremendous new force for global good would come into being.

The United Religions Initiative is an attempt to call together members of the world's religions and spiritual traditions to create a comprehensive global framework for just such an effort. With the help of an organizational development team from Case Western Reserve University, they are building a worldwide network of supporters at the grassroots level, while simultaneously overseeing a large scale collaborative process of writing an organizational charter for a United Religions Organization. This charter will be formally signed on June 26, 2000, the 55th